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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 000147

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S LUNCH WITH GYEONGGI GOVERNOR,
PYEONGTAEK MAYOR

Classified By: AMB. KATHLEEN STEPHENS. REASONS 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador hosted a working lunch on January 23 for USFK Commanding General "Skip" Sharp, Gyeonggi-do Governor Kim and Pyeongtaek Mayor Song. They discussed how local communities in Tongduchon and Pyeongtaek were responding to the relocation of the 2nd Infantry Division. Kim complained that the central government needed to do more to help the affected local communities. He said the people of Tongduchon were particularly unhappy because local benefits from the consolidation and relocation of U.S. forces on the peninsula appeared to be going primarily to Yongsan and Pyeongtaek. General Sharp briefed them on USFK's plan for normalization of tours, stressing that more schools would be needed to accommodate the additional 8,000 family members that would eventually move to the Pyeongtaek area. Mayor Song stated that by partnering with private American education providers, and opening up those schools to Korean as well as American students, it would be possible to fund them all at no expense to USFK. Governor Kim agreed, stressing that "the best alliance would be an educational alliance." Further discussion, however, raised the potential for problems with the Ministry of Education and other segments of Korean society. It was agreed that the provincial and city governments would consult further with the Embassy and USFK to figure out the best approach for meeting the educational needs of our military families, while perhaps also benefiting the local community. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On January 23 the Ambassador hosted a working lunch for U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commanding General Walter "Skip" Sharp, Gyeonggi-do Governor Kim Moon-soo, and Pyeongtaek Mayor Song Myung-ho. They discussed how local communities in Tongduchon and Pyeongtaek are responding to the relocation of the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division (2ID). The Governor, who is considered a contender to be the next ROK president, complained that the central government needed to do much more to help the affected local communities. He stated that the ROK presidency was the most powerful of its kind, while local governments were weak and lacked autonomy. He said the people of Tongduchon were particularly unhappy because local benefits from USFK consolidation and relocation projects appeared to be going primarily to Yongsan and Pyeongtaek. He cited as evidence the special law the National Assembly had passed that allowed Mayor Song to proceed with development

plans in Pyeongtaek, while Mayor Oh in Tongduchon had yet to be similarly empowered because of an ongoing tug-of-war over the land between the Ministry of National Defense and local government. The Governor predicted that a special law for Tongduchon would eventually pass the National Assembly, but that the scope of that legislation had yet to be determined.

13. (C) The Ambassador stressed throughout the lunch that the U.S. Government wished to work closely not only with the ROK central government, but with all the relevant elected officials in Korea, to understand and appropriately address the needs of local communities affected by our alliance transformation efforts. She said we must be mindful of the impact our plans are having on local communities to be good neighbors, but also because of the larger political issues at stake. General Sharp said he had promised Mayor Oh over breakfast the week before that he would work to release part of the land currently in use by 2ID as soon as it could be made available.

14. (C) Governor Kim thanked the Ambassador and General Sharp for their efforts, commenting that President Lee Myung-bak and the Grand National Party supported USFK, but that progressive organizations could still cause problems for the ROKG and USG by opposing various aspects of the Yongsan Relocation and Land Partnership plans. He said there was very little anti-Americanism in South Korea, but that there was some anti-superpower sentiment in most Koreans that could rise up on occasion to negatively impact the overall U.S.-ROK relationship. He predicted, however, that anti-China

feelings in South Korea would grow stronger for the same reason. What we (South Koreans) need is rationalism, not nationalism, he concluded.

15. (C) Governor Kim brought up a recent fire that had killed four protesters and a Korean policeman in a squatters' dispute in the Yongsan area. He contrasted that with over 4,000 meetings Lee Myung-bak had with residents affected by the Cheonggycheon development project when he was mayor of Seoul. Kim's point was that local unrest could be contained and resolved, but to do so government leaders needed to take great care and put forth much effort to alleviate local concerns before they flared out of control.

16. (C) General Sharp then briefed Governor Kim and Mayor Song on USFK's plan for normalization of tours, stressing that more schools would be needed to accommodate the additional 8,000 family members that would eventually move to the Pyeongtaek area. Mayor Song said that by partnering with private American education providers, and opening up those schools to Korean as well as American students, it would be possible to fund them all at no expense to USFK. He proposed partnering with U.S. universities interested in building satellite campuses in the Pyeongtaek area. He said they might be persuaded to include facilities for elementary, middle and high school levels in their planning (citing Georgia Tech and the New Jersey based Stevens Institute of Technology as examples of interested institutions that are already engaged in discussions with Pyeongtaek City). Governor Kim agreed with the idea in principle, stressing that "the best alliance would be an educational alliance." He also noted that it was most desirable for Koreans to learn English in Korea, rather than traveling abroad to do so, but that the poor quality of English education in Korea currently drove many of them to seek study in the United States.

17. (C) Further discussion raised the potential for problems with the Ministry of Education and segments of the Korean population that valued educational egalitarianism. They who would argue that the children of Pyeongtaek were being given an unfair advantage over children that live in other cities. Mayor Song claimed that the special law would, nonetheless, allow for such schools to be built, but others at the lunch expected there would be obstacles. Governor Kim pointed out that in Korea the passion for egalitarianism in education was almost as strong as the passion for education itself.

Undaunted, Mayor Song proposed that the provincial and city governments would consult further with the Embassy and USFK to figure out the best approach for meeting the educational needs of our military families, while perhaps also benefiting the local community. The Ambassador and General Sharp agreed, although the Ambassador cautioned that the U.S. Government must take great care not to be seen as involving itself in the ROK educational debate.

STEPHENS